

ASIA BIRTHPLACE OF ST. NICHOLAS

Contrary to General Belief in This Country, He Was Not of German Origin

BORN IN SIXTH CENTURY

Worshiped by Italian Sea Traders as Their Special Protector—Played Double Role in This Country in Early Days.

Just why so many Americans think of the good Saint Nicholas as a German saint, and on second guess accord it him with Dutch ancestry, is not known. But it is undoubtedly the general belief in our country that the saint, whose birthday, December 6, is celebrated in some countries as the "gift festival" of the year, was of Teutonic extraction.

The Christmas saint really was born in Asia Minor, in Pontus, in the province of Lycia, some time in the sixth century. St. Nicholas of Bari, he is oftenest called by Europeans, but only the bones of St. Nicholas resting for eight centuries in the crypt of a handsome cathedral at Bari, Italy, have given him that title. He never lived in Bari. Italian sea traders, who worshiped him as their special protector, stole his body from its resting place in Myra in the twelfth century and brought it to the Italian seaport. Since that time the celebration held there in the saint's honor is unique.

The Eastern world knew and loved him first, but it is from Western Europe that we learn of many of the quaint customs connected with the celebration of his birth. In Lycia he lived to a good old age, filling his days even in childhood by doing good deeds and giving lavishly to the poor of the town he inhabited. It was Christlike to give, so, as a steward of God, his wealth belonged to God's children. Nicholas believed. Finally he was made bishop of Myra, where he went to live after a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

It was not strange that after such a life of charity he should become a saint in the common people, even as St. George was a saint of knightlyhood. He was invoked by the laborer toiling for his daily bread, by mariners, by merchants. He was protector of the weak against the strong, the poor against the rich, the captive the prisoner, the slave. He was especial guardian of maidens, schoolboys, the orphan poor. Throughout all Catholic Europe children are taught to reverence him, and to believe if they are docile and attentive to their duties he will fill the cup or stocking with chocolates if they are naughty or idle, he certainly has a rod in pickle to bring along for them.

Saint Nicholas has found his way to America in double role of benefactor and lugaboo. Among the Pennsylvania Dutch parents still admonish children: "Be good, Cornelia will get you!"—the angel being a species of unkind Santa Claus and closely related to the "old Nick." In some sections Kris Kringle appears in combined role of Santa Claus and Christchild. He has other names—Sankelous, Olweas, Niz, St. Nizko.

Although strangely little is known of St. Nicholas in America, a few churches scattered over the country bear his name. No saint of the calendar has as many churches, altars and chapels erected in his honor. Most towns in England boast churches bearing St. Nicholas' name. There are more than a hundred in Belgium and thousands scattered over Europe. But wherever he is worshiped and his birthday observed it is always in remembrance of the fact that he is a follower and disciple of the Christ, whose coming was the greatest gift of all.

Charity at Christmas.

There can be no holier sentiment attached to a gift on Christmas day than charity, for charity combines all that is good and tender in human ideal, impulse and emotion. There is a double joy in charity, for it blesses two. It not only gives happiness in the act itself, but it quickens and develops, for all after life, pure, precious qualities of mind and heart that are a well-spring of peace. Charity comes nearer to spanning the immeasurable space between the sin of this world and the holiness of heaven than any other blessing that mankind knows.

An ideal Christmas which would really mean genuine good will among men is one in which none should be cold, hungry, shelterless or friendless—one in which they who have would think first of them who have not.—Christian Herald.

Boxing Day in England.

Boxing day is little known in America, but its observance is general in Great Britain. It is the day after Christmas day, and is observed as a holiday, Christmas being reserved for religious observation. A feature of the day is the giving of gifts by employers to employees. These are called Christmas boxes.

Christmas Joys.

We get most of the enjoyment of Christmas out of the dreams that come before and after. Oh, to dream of it before it comes, to enjoy it while it is here, and to appreciate it when it has gone!

Should be Quarantined

Many physicians believe that any one who has a bad cold should be completely isolated to prevent other members of the family and associates from contracting the disease, as colds are about as catching as measles. One thing sure—the sooner one rids himself of a cold the less danger, and you will look a good while before you find a better medicine than Chamberlain's Cough Remedy to aid you in curing a cold.

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